

**County of San Diego
Health and Human Services Agency
Public Health Services
Update on Major Preparedness Accomplishments
May 2004**

The County of San Diego has been aggressive in the past few years in strengthening its epidemiology, disease control and laboratory capacity in order to protect the public from disease outbreaks. Following are a few key achievements:

- Enhancement of the local Emergency Medical Alert Network (EMAN), an electronic communication system which has become the key link between public health and the medical community, particularly infectious disease specialists and emergency department personnel. For more information on EMAN, visit Community Epidemiology's Web site at: www.sdepi.org.
- Development of the Enhanced Health Surveillance System (EHSS) that analyzes a variety of different data sources to continually monitor the health of the public. Reporting sources include chief complaint data from the EMS system, influenza-like illness data, reportable disease data, school absenteeism reports, pharmaceutical data, animal health data from the County Vet, and data from the Medical Examiner.
- Design of three educational programs for Health and Human Services Agency staff, clinical professionals, and the general public.
- Increased laboratory capacity which brings the San Diego Public Health Laboratory up to a designated "Reference Laboratory" capable of using Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) and other techniques for rapid DNA analysis of such agents as Anthrax, Plague and pox viruses.
- Establishment of a network of local Public Information Officers (PIO). Trainings have been conducted on the use of appropriate risk communication strategies.
- Formation of a smallpox response team divided into two components (medical treatment teams in the hospitals and a public health response

team for investigation and disease control) as part of the nation's Phase I Smallpox Campaign.

- Implementation of the County Alert Service System (CASS) that allows for the mass notification of selected teams of people in an emergency such as the Metropolitan Medical Strike Team (MMST), the PIO Network and County Emergency Operations Center personnel. This system is currently being enhanced to provide telephone alerts and instructions to people in specific geographic areas using technology similar reverse -911 systems.
- Finally, significant increases in the overall infrastructure of public health in San Diego to respond to emergent disease outbreaks, both natural and intentional.